New Directions for Whole Earth; A Personal Statement

Peter Warshall, editor

Our present readership holds tenaciously to the lifelines of hope and community. They are comfortable balancing analysis with devotion. They stick with **Whole Earth** as a "community of common interest" -- not mere subscribers. They are proud that **Whole Earth**'s goal has been to change civilization rather than to publish a catalog or magazine. Seventy-five percent of the readers renew. They recently sent us over $100,000 as seed money to re-start the magazine.

The young are rightly more cynical -- many wanting simpler lives without the hassle of endlessly drawing moral lines around job choice, what products to purchase, or community responsibilities. The new readership does nurture a desire to "do good for the planet" and appears more comfortable with spiritual and ethical discussion than the baby-boomer generation. But, because of ensuing planet madness, they also sport a more fearful and conservative enclave mentality, an attempt to shelter themselves as best possible from external chaotic politics, the scads of bizarre media stories, and unimportant horseshit injected into daily life. It is into this world that the new **Whole Earth** plunges and tries to cast a wider net. Even more severely than the 1960s and 1970s, global events subvert local and bioregional commitments. When we started, the bumpersticker "Think globally, act locally" seemed connected to real possibilities. But, the new bumpersticker: "Think locally, think globally; act locally, act globally" overwhelms.

For the first years, I have set out preliminary guidelines:

• No magazine umbrellas the diversity of non-governmental organizations, the whistle-blowers, the loyal heretics, rebel scientists, and wise integrators now active on the planet. **There is no central voice for civilian groups, no voice for citizen solidarity.** Nevertheless, it is the NGOs and key individuals that are the central driving force for a restorative and humane economics, for preservation of planetary ecological and protection of traditional native communities, and linguistic diversity. No magazine defines the obstacles, tells the stories, features the skillful means, and shares the "tools" required to confront the new global trade networks and their organizations (legal and criminal) nor the increasing weakness of governments, institutions and infrastructure that were supposed to improve the welfare of their constituents.

In each issue, **Whole Earth** will: (1) feature a topic about the whole Earth (e.g., sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and trade, money, environment and religion, livestock raising, infrastructure vs. ecostructure); (2) create a "Yellow Pages" with access to concerned groups; (3) track recent books, publications and videos; and (4) if possible, provide a "Planet Citizen: Persistence Furthers" map of the Earth with natural history, restorative or political items, not covered by major media. In the tradition that started with offering alternative sources of knowledge to college drop-outs, the features

will constitute a **"core curriculum"** to most students (or even their teachers) in college courses and unknown to most citizens who have access to mainstream media. The core includes biodiversity, cultural diversity, all aspects of sustainability, regenerative economics, watershed community and local governance, household integrity and consumer practices, environmental health, taming technology, political tools, right livelihood, and learning.

• The twenty-first century will need a new vocabulary as well as a new mindset or spiritual non-denominational paradigm to accommodate both its population size and pluralism. **Whole Earth** will focus on articles and books that **overcome false dichotomies and over-compartmentalize thinking.** The issues are not easy. Some involve life-and-death and strongly influence households and population management (When is a fertilized ovum to be considered a "human" or a soulful human? When have we lived long enough? Who has responsibility for the continuation or ending of life? At what point on the food chain should we eat?). Some involve daily life, personal choice and commitment to activism (How will teenagers find meaningful work and service? At what point does job security or the fear of career stagnation become intolerable? When does jet-setting in the name of helping the earth or corporations or refugees become flagrantly hypocritical?) Some involve uncertainty and limits to human capacities. (When we are told to take the long-view and not get overwhelmed by the petty, little squabbles, how long is long and what is a "small" squabble? Given limited resources, how to decide which species or communities to triage in order to protect others?)

• The **Whole Earth** will renew our focus on the **place of the consumer** -- the consumer as hero and the consumer as victim. To what extent can the consumer turn around the economic/ecologic system by boycotts, buycotts, green certification and other tools. We will feature these tools and "product transparencies" -- the understanding of how a product interconnects with the natural capital of the planet (i.e., life-cycle thinking or cradle-to-cradle analysis). When we can afford it, we will try to utilize tree-free paper.

• We will continue **our lineage of hope, conscience, optimism and free thought.** More than any response from our loyal readers, it is this eclectic coverage of new books, tools and adventurous ideas that appeals. Some idea or suggestion changed our readers lives and transformed the magazine into a "community" of interest in which they feel they are a part. The non-environmental and less political "domains" (essentially similar to the **Millennium Whole Earth Catalog**) include our surrealist and beat poetics lineage, non-commodity ("traditional") music, all kinds of crafts, outdoors sports and low-cost travel, anthropology, ethno-botanics, eco-tourism, questioning the health care establishment, sex, parenting, small business guides, kids, wandering, comics, and just about anything stimulating and useful.

• The planet now has no corner untouched by human influence -- if only because we have altered the atmosphere. To counter the culture of the techno-sublime, **new senses of exploration and discovery must engage the curiosity of the young.** We will unabashedly promote natural history as the richest source of planetary knowledge, philosophy, and embedded thought; and provide access to the new ideas in ecology and conservation biology. Ecological theory is under grand transformation -- Fragile Nature vs. Resilient Nature; Balanced Nature vs. Chaotic Nature; Evolving Nature vs. Created Nature, and the End-of-Nature. Proponents ranging from C.S. Holling, Reed Noss, Arne Naess, Howard Odum, Thomas Hoekstra, and Richard O'Neill are well-known to the editor who has spent most of his working life as a maniacal naturalist with a strong activist bent.

In short, the **Whole Earth** must first do its job of discovering and reporting the materials and thought-tools that readers need to change their lives. Again and again, readers thank us for guiding them to something unknown that they did not even know they wanted to know. But, once found, the idea or ideal or model or tactic changed their lives. For the editorial staff, the great challenge is providing the skillful means for our readers to get out there and make choices that will help build muscle on the soft bones of the embryonic sustainability movement. The **Whole Earth** is not a magazine so much as an impassioned vehicle, enabling active citizens to be soulful warriors in a world where daily life displays seemingly endless harms to the watersheds and the communities that they dwell within.